

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, UR, US

SUBJECT: PROPOSED INTER-GOVERNMENTAL TOURISM AGREEMENT

REF: MOSCOW 18143, MOSCOW 18341

1. FOLLOWING IS BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON DISCUSSIONS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE CONCERNING A POSSIBLE US-SOVIET TOURISM AGREEMENT. DURING A VISIT TO MOSCOW IN THE SUMMER OF 1976, HAL SCOTT, TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL PRESIDENT, FLOATED THE IDEA OF A US-USSR TOURISM AGREEMENT WITH NIKITKIN AND BOYCHENKO OF INTOURIST. THE SOVIETS REPORTEDLY RESPONDED ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND SUGGESTED THAT SUCH AN AGREEMENT SHOULD BE CONCLUDED IN TIME FOR NEXT WEEK'S TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL MEETINGS.

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2. HOWARD CLARK, CHAIRMAN OF AMERICAN EXPRESS, WAS ALSO ENTHUSIASTIC AFTER DISCUSSING THE IDEA WITH SCOTT, AND AMERICAN EXPRESS VICE PRESIDENT CORD HANSEN-STURM CONTACTED COMMERCE AND STATE TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF PROPOSING A TOURISM AGREEMENT DURING THE FORTHCOMING COUNCIL

MEETINGS. HANSEN-STURM AND JAMES CONZLEMAN OF THE COUNCIL MET WITH STATE, COMMERCE, AND USIA REPS ON NOV. 4 AND GAVE US DRAFT TEXT MENTIONED REFTEL.

3. WE HAD NOT SEEN DRAFT BEFORE NOV. 4 AND STATED THAT WE DO NOT RPT NOT WANT THE COUNCIL TO HAND THEIR DRAFT OVER TO THE SOVIETS, AS THIS WOULD AMOUNT TO THE FIRST STEP IN A NEGOTIATION, WHICH SHOULD BE USG'S RESPONSIBILITY. WE ADVISED PRIVATE INDUSTRY REPS THAT US SIDE OF THE COUNCIL COULD SAY THAT THEY HAD DISCUSSED THE GENERAL IDEA OF A TOURISM AGREEMENT WITH THE USG, AND THAT WE HAD EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO EXPLORE THIS POSSIBILITY AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME. ANY POINTS ON THE SUBSTANCE OF AN AGREEMENT WOULD, AT THIS STAGE, HAVE TO BE ADVANCED STRICTLY AS THE COUNCIL'S IDEAS, AND NOT THE USG'S.

4. CONZLEMAN SAID HE WOULD BE BACK IN TOUCH BEFORE THE END OF NOVEMBER TO CHECK THE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE THE COUNCIL WILL USE WITH THE SOVIETS IN DESCRIBING THE USG'S ATTITUDE TOWARD AN AGREEMENT (WE HAVE NOT YET HEARD FROM HIM).

5. THE DRAFT AGREEMENT HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO VARIOUS OFFICES IN STATE AND OTHER AGENCIES. WE HAVE ADVISED HANSEN-STURM THAT WE ARE RESERVING SPECIFIC COMMENTS UNTIL THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IS IN PLACE.

6. AMERICAN EXPRESS HAS EXPRESSED DESIRABILITY OF E/C COUNSELOR OR REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDANCE AT TOURISM WORKING GROUP MEETING MORNING OF NOV. 30 AS OBSERVER. WILLIAM EDGAR, EUR/SOV, CAN DISCUSS PROPOSED TOURISM AGREEMENT FURTHER WITH EMBASSY WHEN HE IS IN MOSCOW FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS. ROBINSON
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